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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: WEST BENGAL: JASWANT SINGH'S EXPULSION WEAKENS GJMM'S
NEGOTIATING POWER

REF: A. NEW DELHI 1747
[1](#)B. KOLKATA 215

[1](#)1. (SBU) The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) recent expulsion of Darjeeling's parliamentary representative Jaswant Singh (Reftel A), who supports political party Gorkha Jan Mukti Morcha's (GJMM) efforts to create a new Gorkhaland state, is a temporary setback for GJMM who is now reassessing its relationship with the BJP. GJMM leaders has publicly said that Singh's expulsion will not affect GJMM's relationship with the BJP, pointing out that the BJP's manifesto included support for a Gorkhaland state. However, GJMM Central Committee member Amar Lama told PolFSN that it is not clear, even to the GJMM's top leadership, whether or not the BJP will continue to endorse GJMM's call for a new state particularly since Singh is not required to step down from his parliamentary seats.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The expulsion comes on the heels of talks held on August 11 between GOI and GOWB bureaucrats and GJMM leaders. Lama led a 12-member GJMM delegation to New Delhi to address GJMM's demand for a separate Gorkhaland state. This is the third time the three groups have met since GJMM was formed in [1](#)2007. The GOI and the GOWB speak with one government voice when talking to the GJMM, the main political party leading the Gorkhaland movement. GJMM's leader Bimal Gurung did not attend the talks, he is expected to join when the talks reach the political level. Lama told PolFSN that the state and the central governments agreed to GJMM's demand to dissolve the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). Lama said the government also agreed to withdraw the draft Sixth Schedule Amendment Bill, which would have granted tribal status to the DGHC, submitted in parliament in 2007. Lama said these two concessions, while mostly symbolic, have built goodwill and confidence among negotiators for more substantive future talks.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Lama said that the GJMM is now discussing what type of administrative entity should be established when the DGHC is dissolved. The defunct council is run by an administrator (Reftel B) and all its 42-members have resigned. Contacts in Darjeeling are speculating that the new entity that GJMM will propose could range from a DGHC with more power and resources to a centrally-administered union territory. Once GJMM develops its vision, it must return to the negotiating table to finalize the arrangements.

Comment

[1](#)4. (SBU) Singh's expulsion and the BJP's poor performance in the parliamentary election have weakened GJMM's political clout and it's power at the negotiating table. With BJP's significant loss in parliamentary election, detractors within and outside GJMM have already started to question Gurung's political foresight, and Singh's expulsion from the BJP will raise even more questions. By dissolving the defunct DGHC and scrapping

pending legislation, the GOI and GOWB created a sense of goodwill without making any substantive concessions. The real test for Gurung and GJMM will be when negotiations are held on the structure and power of the administrative entity that will be put in place in Darjeeling. It is unclear how GJMM will attempt to compensate for its loss of political leverage and whether it will use more aggressive tactics and agitations in Darjeeling to strengthen its hand.

PAYNE